

important, however, to show the operation of the mores on facts erroneously assumed, and their power to work out their effects, as an independent societal operation, without regard to error in the material to which they are applied.

513. Incest taboo strongest in the strongest groups. We shall see, in the cases to be presented, that incest has a wider definition and a stricter compulsion in great tribes, and in prosperity or wealth, than in small groups and poverty. The definiteness of this taboo, and the strictness with which it is enforced, seem to be correlative with the energy of the tribal discipline in general and the vigor of the collective life of the group. Wives can be got abroad, either by capture or contract, only by those who command respect for their power or who use power. On the other hand, endogamy is both cause and effect of weakness and proceeds with decline. Some cases will be given below in which incestuous marriages occur where the parties are unable to obtain any other wives. Neglect of the incest taboo is rather a symptom than a cause of group decline.

514. Incest in ethnography. Martins says of the tribes on the upper Amazon, in general, that incest in all grades is frequent amongst them. In the more southern regions the taboo is stricter and better observed. Amongst the former it is shameful for a man to marry his sister or his brother's daughter. The usages are the more strict the larger the tribe is. In small isolated groups it frequently happens that a man lives with his sister. He heard of two tribes, the Coerunas and the Uainumus, who observed little rule on the subject. They were dying out.¹ "Not seldom an Indian is father and brother of his son."² Effertz writes that, amongst the Indians of the Sierra Madre, Mexico, incest between father and daughter "is of daily occurrence," although incest between brother and sister is entirely unknown. The former unions are due to economic interest. The

Indian tills small bits of land scattered in the hills. He cannot exist without a woman to grind corn for him. When he goes to a distant patch of land he takes his daughter with him. He has but one blanket and the nights are cold. If he has no daughter he must take another woman, but then he must share his crop with her.³

515. The tribes of South Australia are "forbidden to have intercourse with mothers, sisters, and first or second cousins. This religious law is strictly carried out and adhered to under penalty of death." The most

¹ *Ethnog. Brazil*, 115. ² *Ibid.*, 334 note. ³ *Umsckau*, VIII, 496.